

A revised structuring of the typologies of blame avoidance upon the British government's handling of the Covid-19 pandemic.

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Introduction

Governments adopted wide-ranging policies in response to Covid-19. Many governments received criticism for their handling of the pandemic. While a lack of understanding and analysis has occurred about the impact of blame avoidance used by the British government in their handling of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Several analytical frameworks have been presented for analysing how governments can avoid the blame for controversial policies (e.g. Pierson 1994, Hering 2008). In this project, I will draw on the most comprehensive attempt to theorise the blame avoidance strategies pursued by governments found in Giger and Nelson's study of welfare retrenchment (Giger, N., & Nelson, M. 2011) Utilising their framework this paper will analyse the techniques governments used to avoid blame during the Covid-19 pandemic. Building upon past workings of the typologies of blame avoidance through the use of coding schemes to understand and analyse avoidance strategies used by the British government. And exploring the ideas of Issue rejection and blame generation.

Revised typologies

Hering revised the Typologies of Blame Avoidance (TBA) to a two-dimensional classification which differentiates four types of blame-avoiding strategies (BAS): cooperation, coalition, distribution, and discourse. This corresponds with the existing typologies of Pal and Weaver (2003), Pierson (1994) and Hood (2002). This is demonstrated in table 2.

The four diving categories set out in the revised typologies are a result of a combination between party/voter orientation and perception/preference orientation. The revised classification includes cooperation where parties work with opposition parties to prevent them from rallying voters against them. Hering argues this can bypass grand coalitions to act on unpopular state reform. By collaborating in the constraints of electoral competition allows parties to effectively avoid blame from the electorate on unpopular decision making. Meanwhile, the desire for coalitions is shown through Downs' theory of party competition (Downs, 1957). Whereby a grand coalition between parties is used as a blame avoidance strategy to reform legislation. But they instead reach a formal agreement on a policy alternative compared to informal cooperation.

Preference-oriented strategies underpins informal cooperation as it produces a redefinition of votes preferences due to changes in competing party policies. Consequently, grand coalitions are a form of perception-orientation. By prescribing changes in the political discourse ensures a manipulation of the voter's perceptions on particular policies.

But these categories don't show the similarities between grand coalitions and informal cooperation. To recognise this Hering identifies a second dimension of party-oriented and voter-oriented strategies.

Party-orientation directly avoids electoral competition. Reducing blame generation via the use of opposition support. Comparatively, Voter-orientation indirectly avoids electoral mobilisation. Reducing blame attribution from voters. Importantly noting that it has a limited impact on the prevention of blame generation (Hering, 2008).

Therefore, cooperation and coalitions are both party-oriented due to their strategy of avoiding completion. Both Discourse and Distribution take upon the opposite role to their collaboration-based counterparts. Holding the attributes of voter-orientation.

Table 2: A revised typology of blame avoiding strategies Hering (2008)

	Party-oriented 'Competition Avoidance'	Voter-oriented 'Mobilisation Avoidance'
<i>Preference-oriented</i>	Cooperation	Distribution
	Alternative Restriction	Compensation
	Issue Removal	Exemption
		Dispersion
		Concentration
<i>Perception-oriented</i>	Coalition	Discourse
	Circling the Wagons	Obfuscation
	Agenda Limitation	Issue Redefinition
		Passing the Buck
		Scapegoating
		Delegation
		Insulation

Research progression and Contribution to the field

Through the coding process different methods were used before deciding to utilise a per sentence model. When beginning the process, it became apparent that blame avoidance could only flourish in the correct conditions. Without the initial blame generation, no coding can occur to particular segments of dialogue as no blame avoidance occurred.



When starting the analysis process, it seemed to be a more effective system to code the documents in larger segments. By segmenting the coding system into paragraphs and topic areas it allowed for a full analysis of context that is greater than single sentences.

However, this produced multiple problems as it showed there to be less avoidance than there actually was per document due to summarising blame strategies. As a result, making it impossible to understand the percentage of dialogue that correlates with a particular type of blame avoidance. As a result, the coding scheme was conducted on a per sentence basis in order to collect a thorough discourse analysis.

Furthermore, while carrying out the coding process it seemed that the revised TBA didn't fully fulfil the strategies being used during the covid-19 pandemic. As it appears that previous studies solely focused on the construction of blame avoidance with limited attributes to blame generation. Without which no typology was created that fulfils the function of denial. This can be seen by the government contracts debate on Covid-19 PPE supplies 21st June 2021 "but there is an absurd narrative that he got more than £100 million-worth of business because of links to the Conservative party" (Hansard, 2021, Covid-19, Volume 686) this statement denies the existence of the blame generation and so this research created a new typology to fulfil that need which has been labelled 'issue rejection'. Whereby an issue is completely rejected. In a way that shuts down further dialogue to continue blame generation.

Another way issue rejection is utilised is through denying blame generation through comparison. During the Covid-19 pandemic this occurred comparing states progress. The British government used this to avoid blame by rejecting the blame generation due to their actions causing better outcomes than other states. As shown by the statement by Boris Johnson "Let me point out that not only did this country devise the first effective treatment of covid" "become the first to produce a vaccine that could be used at fridge temperature" "it has vaccinated more people than the rest of Europe combined" Hansard (2021, Covid-19, Volume 686)

"Most scholars focus on the risk of **blame attribution** while few focus on **blame generation**" (Hering, 2008, p.177). While Hering picked up on this he failed to note the idea that blame generation can be met with the response of blame rejection not just avoidance.

Blame generation —————> **Blame rejection**

Methodology

overview

To fulfil the aims of this project, I will use discourse analysis to assess and record the frequency of varying blame avoidance strategies used within the revised typologies of blame including the addition of issue rejection. Sourced from relevant parliamentary debates throughout the Covid-19 pandemic.

Following the collection of relevant literature, I will construct a coding scheme, based on the work of Luke March (2017) and other research guidance (Bryman, 2016), before analysing the data. This section will further discuss the process of methodology used in this work.

Text selection

Due to the extensive number of published debates and inquiries from this time, this project required a sampled selection of sources that were relevant to my enquiry, all sourced from the period between 2020 to 2021.

Due to the sheer volume of samples, the project was unable to consider all possible samples. Instead, material was selected based on the official Covid-19 updates that occurred in the Commons. These discussions gave a general briefing of all inquiries around the topic of Covid-19 during that time and so would contain a broad source of discussion and so holds high levels of validity for coding blame avoidance. In addition to having senior ministers present to observe their use of blame avoidance.

It should be noted that other debates sources were also included that specialised into the devolved nations and key discussions to the Covid-19 pandemic including Covid contracts and financial implications.

building the coding scheme

This research proposes to analyse the differing blame avoidance strategies utilised by the British government during the Covid-19 pandemic. For this to be achieved, a discourse scheme was designed to inform the coding undertaken. Based on the revised TBA and issue rejection. The table below shows an overview of each typology description and exemplar material.

Typologies of blame avoidance Coding Scheme

Name of typology of blame avoidance strategies and codes.	Traits of the strategy	Example sentences
Cooperation	A form of informal party cooperation employed to reduce blame. By seeking an informal understanding/ agreement with their competitors for office on	

<p>Alternative Restrictions x-coop/ar</p>	<p>policy alternatives that they offer to voters. While restricting electoral competition to unpopular reforms.</p> <p>This is both preference-orientated and party-orientated (competition avoidance) strategies which includes:</p> <p>Alternative Restrictions-</p> <p>This is where alternative restrictions occur to move concentration from blame worthy actions onto other actions (e.g. legislation)</p>	<p>“The best thing I can do is encourage my hon. Friend in the excellent work he is doing in holding the Scottish nationalist Government to account, and encourage them to get on and use the funds that the UK Government are giving to the people of Scotland to support jobs in Scotland”</p> <p>https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2021-01-06/debates/F28A020C-8CF9-4D5E-9C9A-CC75D540D7C8/Covid-19</p>
<p>Issue Removals X-coop/ir</p>	<p>Issue Removals-</p> <p>This is the removal of an issue from the political agenda.</p>	<p>“I am grateful to the right hon. and learned Gentleman for supporting the vaccination programme. I must say that I do remember the derision with which he attacked the vaccine taskforce and that efforts that it went to to secure huge supplies”</p> <p>https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2021-01-06/debates/F28A020C-8CF9-4D5E-9C9A-CC75D540D7C8/Covid-19</p>
<p>Distribution</p>	<p>This is both preference-orientated and voter-orientated (mobilisation avoidance) strategies which includes:</p>	

<p>Compensation X-Distra/com</p>	<p>Compensation- something, typically money, awarded to someone in recognition of loss. To prevent consequence for their own actions and avoid blame.</p> <p>participates in the side payments to losers of reforms to ensure the issue ends quietly with limited press.</p> <p>Seek sufficient compensation for potential losers so that losses become minimal, while costs of compensation are broadly distributed.</p>	<p>“the purposes of the £600 million extra that we are putting into the social care system and that will go direct to the frontline” https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2020-05-18/debates/8FA78498-C990-4246-A745-AE0F36F7B948/Covid-19Response</p>
<p>Exemption- X-Distra/ex</p>	<p>Exemption- where politicians restrict the negative consequences of reforms towards their voter base</p>	<p>“UK Government have chosen to spend £3.3 billion of borrowed money on the stamp duty freeze, which is a vast subsidy to the middle classes who are buying and selling domestic property” https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2021-01-06/debates/F28A020C-8CF9-4D5E-9C9A-CC75D540D7C8/Covid-19</p>
<p>Dispersion- X-Distra/dis</p>	<p>Dispersion- Keep level of losers low and broad enough or disperse over a long period of time, so that opposition lacks incentives to mobilise.</p>	<p>“I am sure that hon. Members on both sides of the House would agree that, in terms of prioritising system design, the scheme that we have set up for 90% of the workforce who are employed should be delivered first and quickly, and that is what we have committed to do, ideally by the end of April” https://hansardparliament.uk/Commons/2020-03-24/debates/0C9CFE92-EEE6-4859-9601-CF0803206642/Covid-19SupportForBusinesses</p>

<p>Concentration- X-Distra/con</p>	<p>Concentration- Impose losses on groups that are politically weakest or viewed least sympathetically by others and, thus, unlikely to build a broad coalition against loss-imposing action.</p>	<p>None sourced in sampled documents</p>
<p>Coalition</p> <p>Circling the Wagon X-coa/ctw</p> <p>Agenda Limitation X-coa/al</p>	<p>This is both perception-orientated and party-orientated (competition avoidance) strategies which includes:</p> <p>Circling the Wagon- unite in defence of a common interest.</p> <p>Achieve a consensus among all major policymakers before a loss-imposing initiative is announced, to make that initiative seem inevitable and necessary.</p> <p>Agenda Limitation- Keep loss-imposing actions from being taken openly (e.g., by building them with other legislation) to limit blame-generating activity by opponents.</p>	<p>“The decision to close schools this week was inevitable, but it will have a detrimental effect on many children, especially the most disadvantaged.”</p> <p>“We will do whatever we can to support the Government on this” https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2021-01-06/debates/F28A020C-8CF9-4D5E-9C9A-CC75D540D7C8/Covid-19</p> <p>“It should be happening on the Floor of the House of Commons, but the Government do not seem too keen to have it there, so we are having it here instead” https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2021-06-21/debates/6FCF1DEF-15A4-46FF-8728-D7B2FA84F549/GovernmentContractsCovid-19</p>

	<p>Similar to cooperation is the use of a grand coalition between parties to reform legislation. But they instead reach a formal agreement on a policy alternative.</p>	
<p>Discourse</p>	<p>This is both perception-orientated and voter-orientated (mobilisation avoidance) strategies which includes:</p>	
<p>Obfuscation X-Disco/ob</p>	<p>Obfuscation- making something obscure, unclear, or unintelligible.</p> <p>This demonstrates how during a crisis politicians can limit the visibility of action by covering up their decision making with the ongoing crisis to avoid blame.</p>	<p>“Prime Minister insisted in the main Chamber that all covid contracts were on the record, no details of that one were revealed until after the Good Law Project wrote to the Government about it. They were nine months late in providing those details”</p> <p>https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2021-06-21/debates/6FCF1DEF-15A4-46FF-8728-D7B2FA84F549/GovernmentContractsCovid-19</p>
<p>Issue Redefinition X-Disco/ir</p>	<p>Issue Redefinition- Redefining the issue so that the blame is either prevented or moved to someone else.</p>	<p>“We all assume that the Government are one entity, but Departments work in very different ways, often with different IT systems. It can be difficult to move people around the system and to make those systems compatible with each other. They were dealing with a product they were not familiar with in a very highly pressured market. That led to lags in contract publication, as paperwork has been very tricky to join up across systems”</p>

<p>Passing the Buck X-Disco/ptb</p>	<p>Passing the Buck- Delegate detailed decision-making power to another body but constrain its options so that it will have to impose losses while shouldering the blame for doing so.</p>	<p>https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2021-06-21/debates/6FCF1DEF-15A4-46FF-8728-D7B2FA84F549/GovernmentContractsCovid-19</p> <p>“The approach that we propose is safe and is signed off by medical advisers as safe.”</p>
<p>Scapegoating X-Disco/sc</p>	<p>Scapegoating- one that bears the blame for others</p> <p>Blame loss-imposing action on another actor (e.g., courts, a previous government) to make it seem inevitable and/or necessary.</p>	<p>“This was a national emergency and a time of huge global competition for the very same boxes of equipment sitting in Chinese warehouses or waiting to come off their production lines.”</p> <p>“I am afraid I cannot address all of the other items raised, particularly in relation to some of the education contracts, because I have not personally investigated those”</p> <p>https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2021-06-21/debates/6FCF1DEF-15A4-46FF-8728-D7B2FA84F549/GovernmentContractsCovid-19</p>
<p>Delegation X- Disco/del</p>	<p>Delegation-</p> <p>Passing off work onto others so you yourself aren’t blamed for their actions.</p>	<p>“the Chancellor has been looking at many schemes across the European Union and around the world. It is absolutely about timing and I would hope that the Treasury will be making an announcement very soon”</p> <p>“That is the work that the Minister for Women and Equalities, my right hon. Friend the Member for</p>

<p>Insulation X- Disco/insul</p>	<p>Insulation- Delegate decision making power to another body (e.g., court, regulatory agency) that is less sensitive to blame generating pressure.</p>	<p>South West Norfolk (Elizabeth Truss), will be taking forward” https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2020-06-02/debates/F1B37A79-E882-4BBE-857C-C6DBD2689AF/Covid-19Response</p> <p>“All the cash that we have announced, obviously, is passported on; the important thing is that the Labour Government in Wales spend it sensibly” https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2021-01-06/debates/F28A020C-8CF9-4D5E-9C9A-CC75D540D7C8/Covid-19</p>
<p>Issue rejection X-ir</p>	<p>Issue rejection</p> <p>Where an issue is completely rejected. In a way that shuts down further dialogue to continue blame generation.</p> <p>Denying blame generation from occurring in the first place differs from blame removal as they aren’t removing the blame, they deny the blame existing in the first place</p> <p>Also by looking at how one body is doing better than another body and by going over their successes to reject the</p>	<p>“but there is an absurd narrative that he got more than £100 million-worth of business because of links to the Conservative party”</p> <p>“The idea that the Health Secretary rang him up because he had given four thousand quid and had a few photographs taken, with an, “Oi, mate—want to make a few hundred grand next week on PPE?” is utterly preposterous”</p> <p>https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2021-06-21/debates/6FCF1DEF-15A4-46FF-8728-D7B2FA84F549/GovernmentContractsCovid-19</p> <p>“Indeed, she might add to her script that this country has vaccinated more than any other country in Europe put together” https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2021-01-06/debates/F28A020C-8CF9-4D5E-9C9A-CC75D540D7C8/Covid-19</p>

	issue from blame generation.	
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Individual results from sampled debates

Covid-19 update

Volume 674: debated on Tuesday 24 March 2020

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2020-03-24/debates/CCD4997B-275A-4A90-8DDF-7C26C5123885/Covid-19Update>

Total sentences:245

Total blame avoidance sentences: 12

Percentage of blame avoidance: 4.9%

Broken down:

X-Disco/ob 1 (0.41%)

X-ir 3 (1.22%)

X-coa/ctw 5 (2.04%)

X-Distra/com 3 (1.22%)

Covid-19: Support for Businesses

Volume 674: debated on Tuesday 24 March 2020

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2020-03-24/debates/OC9CFE92-EEE6-4859-9601-CF0803206642/Covid-19SupportForBusinesses>

Total sentences:71

Total blame avoidance sentences: 15

Percentage of blame avoidance: 21.13%

Broken down

X-Distra/com: 6 (8.45%)

X-Disco/ob: 6 (8.45%)

X-coa/ctw: 2 (2.82%)

X-Distra/dis: 1 (1.41%)

Covid-19: Economic Support

Volume 674: debated on Wednesday 25 March 2020

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2020-03-25/debates/1397D5A4-C451-4C36-911C-AC93BAF9AE38/Covid-19EconomicSupport>

Total sentences:48

Total blame avoidance sentences: 11

Percentage of blame avoidance: 22.92%

Broken down:

X-Disco/ob: 2 (4.17%)

X-Disco/del: 4 (8.33%)

X-Disco/sc: 1 (2.08%)

X-Distra/com: 4(8.33%)

Covid-19 Response

Volume 675: debated on Wednesday 22 April 2020

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2020-04-22/debates/F992E234-D1A9-47AF-86F7-985C33DA1C05/Covid-19Response>

Total sentences:296

Total blame avoidance sentences: 21

Percentage of blame avoidance: (7.09%)

Broken down:

X-Disco/ob 2(0.68%)

X-Disco/ir 1 (0.34%)

X-ir 9 (3.04%)

X-coa/ctw 1 (0.34%)

X-Disco/insul 1 (0.34%)

X-Disco/del 1 (0.34%)

X-Disco/sc 6 (2.03%)

Covid-19: Local Authority Funding

Volume 675: debated on Tuesday 28 April 2020

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2020-04-28/debates/42492568-DBB3-43C2-BB29-17509EF567C6/Covid-19LocalAuthorityFunding>

Total scentences:21

Total blame avoidance sentences: 6

Percentage of blame avoidance: 28.57%

Broken down:

X- Distra/com: 3 (14.29%)

X-Disco/ob: 3 (14.29%)

Covid-19: Further and Higher Education

Volume 675: debated on Tuesday 5 May 2020

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2020-05-05/debates/B1141EF8-97AE-4B00-9D9E-0FAFC03AE4E8/Covid-19FurtherAndHigherEducation>

Total sentences:22

Total blame avoidance sentences: 8

Percentage of blame avoidance: 36.36%

Broken down:

X- Distra/com: 8 (36.36%)

Covid-19 Response

Volume 676: debated on Monday 18 May 2020

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2020-05-18/debates/8FA78498-C990-4246-A745-AE0F36F7B948/Covid-19Response>

Total sentences: 341

Total blame avoidance sentences: 21

Percentage of blame avoidance: 6.16%

Broken down:

X-ir: 8 (2.35%)

X-Disco/ir: 1 (0.29%)

X-Distra/com: 8 (2.35%)

X-Disco/ob: 1 (0.29%)

X-Disco/sc: 2 (0.59%)

X-Disco/del: 1 (0.29%)

Covid-19 Response

Volume 676: debated on Tuesday 2 June 2020

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2020-06-02/debates/F1B37A79-E882-4BBE-857C-C6BDBD2689AF/Covid-19Response>

Total sentences:346

Total blame avoidance sentences: 34

Percentage of blame avoidance: 9.83%

Broken down:

X-coa/ctw: 2 (0.58%)

X-Disco/ob: 12 (3.47%)

X-Disco/del: 1 (0.29%)

X-Distra/com: 4 (1.16%)

X-Disco/sc: 3 (0.87%)

X-ir: 6 (1.73%)

X-Disco/ir: 4 (1.16%)

X-coa/al: 2 (0.58%)

Covid-19

Volume 686: debated on Wednesday 6 January 2021

<https://hansard X- parliament X- uk/Commons/2021-01-06/debates/F28A020C-8CF9-4D5E-9C9A-CC75D540D7C8/Covid-19>

Total sentences: 507

Total blame avoidance sentences: 46

Percentage of blame avoidance: (9.07%)

Broken down:

X-Distra/com: 17 (3.35%)

X-coa/ctw: 3 (0.59%)

X-coop/ir: 1 (0.2%)

X-ir: 15 (2.96%)

X-Disco/insul: 2 (0.39%)

X-Disco/sc: 2 (0.39%)

X-Disco/ob: 2 (0.39%)

X-Distra/ex: 1 (0.2%)

X-Disco/ir: 2 (0.39%)

x-coop/ar: 1 (0.2%)

Government Contracts: Covid-19

Volume 697: debated on Monday 21 June 2021

[https://hansard X-parliament X-uk/Commons/2021-06-21/debates/6FCF1DEF-15A4-46FF-8728-D7B2FA84F549/GovernmentContractsCovid-19](https://hansard.x-parliament.x-uk/Commons/2021-06-21/debates/6FCF1DEF-15A4-46FF-8728-D7B2FA84F549/GovernmentContractsCovid-19)

Total sentences: 520

Total blame avoidance sentences: 31

Percentage of blame avoidance: 5.96%

Broken down:

X-Distra/com: 2 (0.38%)

X-Disco/ob: 9 (1.73%)

X-ir: 7 (1.35%)

X-Distra/ex: 2 (0.38%)

X-Disco/sc: 4 (0.77%)

X-coa/al: 1 (0.19%)

X-Disco/ir: 6 (1.15%)

Results of blame avoidance coding upon Covid-19 commons debates

Overall Results of Blame avoidance from the selected sample	Number of blame avoidance occurring	Frequency of blame avoidance
Total sentences	2,417	100%
Cooperation		
Alternative restriction	1	0.04%
Issue removal	1	0.04%
Total	2	0.08%
Coalition		
Circling the wagon	13	0.54%
Agenda limitation	3	0.12%
Total	16	0.66%
Distribution		
compensation	55	2.28%
Exemption	3	0.12%
Dispersion	1	0.04%
Concentration	0	0%

Total	59	2.44%
Discourse		
Obfuscation	38	1.57%
Issue redefinition	14	0.58%
Passing the buck	0	0%
Scapegoating	18	0.74%
Delegation	7	0.29%
insulation	3	0.12%
Total	80	3.31%
X-ir	48	1.99%
Total blame avoidance	205	8.48%

Overall Results of Blame avoidance from the selected sample	Number of blame avoidance occurring	Percentage of blame avoidance
Total blame avoidance	205	100%
Cooperation		
Alternative restriction	1	0.49%
Issue removal	1	0.49%
Total	2	0.98%
Coalition		
Circling the wagon	13	6.34%
Agenda limitation	3	1.46%
Total	16	7.8%
Distribution		
compensation	55	26.83%
Exemption	3	1.46%
Dispersion	1	0.49%
Concentration	0	0%
Total	59	28.78%
Discourse		
Obfuscation	38	18.54%
Issue redefinition	14	6.83%

Passing the buck	0	0%
Scapegoating	18	8.78%
Delegation	7	3.41%
insulation	3	1.46%
Total	80	39.02%
X-ir	48	23.41%

Evaluation

The data gathered through discourse analysis suggests that the British and conservative government's strategy to blame avoidance operates with a diverse portfolio of the typologies of blame.

discourse

However, there is a distinct abruption with the use of discourse which utilises mobilisation avoidance. This typology occurs the most on a per sentence basis under the dialogue analysis. Demonstrating that this typology must have been the most effective during the Covid-19 pandemic due to its domination with it representing a total of 39.02% of BAS found. With a percentage of total sentences using this strategy at 3.31%. the reason why this figure may seem very low is due to the fact that blame avoidance can only be extracted from blame placement. Without the initial attachment of blame no avoidance can occur which prevents the ability to code particular segments of dialogue and reduces the percentage of blame worthy sentences.

These results highlight the question why is this the typology of choice for a conservative British government? One explanation could be down to how it operates. Discourse strategies work indirectly to avoid electoral mobilisation in order to reduce blame from voters. While manipulating voter's perceptions. This can be seen as a more discrete method to avoid blame. Compared to a more noticeable coalition. Therefore, discourse could carry less media attention and be more effective in the British political environment of free press for carrying out blame avoidance. In addition to being highly effective at reflecting blame to others including political opponents. Such as the labour leading Welsh parliament. (Hansard, 2021 Government Contracts: Covid-19, Volume 697)

distribution

Meanwhile, the second most commonly used typology by the conservative British government during the Covid-19 pandemic is distribution. Most notably the use of compensation with monetary attributes. Due to the large number of handouts provided by the government during the pandemic. This arguably is mainly at fault of the Lockdowns that occurred. This can be argued as unusual for the conservative ideology as it doesn't fit with the conservative rhetoric of minimal state spending.

The reasoning behind this un-conservative strategy is due to the response of blame generated failure of the government's mishandling of the pandemic. Resulting in the need

for compensation for their failure of the lockdowns to prevent blame attribution on the government through compensation.

The significance of this demonstrates how quickly a party will shift its values to ensure its prolongation in power. As the Conservative British government put aside their values of fiscal responsibility to utilise the compensation strategy of blame avoidance to rebuttal the blame generation put against them.

Cooperation and coalition

Moving onto the party-orientated typologies. The research presents a huge disproportion in occurrences with party-orientated strategies compared to voter-orientation. Due to their small percentage of per sentence represented in the sample of dialogue analysis with cooperation only representing 0.08% per total sentence. Representing less than 1% total blame avoidance. Meanwhile formal coalition typology represented 0.66% of the total per sentence count of the sampled dialogue. Translating into 7.8% of the total amount of blame avoidance this was still significantly lower than its voter-orientated counterparts.

This low count of the cooperation typology doesn't just demonstrate that this is an unpopular strategy with conservative ideology but may also reflect the type of governmental system used in the UK with a 2-party system unlike most of its European neighbours. This makes majoritarian governments more likely and reduces the occurrences of coalition governments forming restricting the need of cooperation and coalition between parties and this may extend towards blame avoidance strategies. Furthermore, it could be estimated that similar results may occur with other nations that have two-party systems such as the US. In addition, other factors could have also played a key role in the outcome of the dialogue analysis. Including cultural factors. Which further research could explore. To understand why different countries responded in differing methods to the pandemic to analyse any patterns in strategies with similar cultures, ideologies and political systems.

issue rejection / blame generation

The dialogue analysis shows us that it is the second largest occurring strategy representing 23.41% of blame avoidance and holding a 1.99% of total sentences analysed. In Scharpf's model, it is assumed that if the opposition does not generate blame, most voters probably do not attribute any blame to the government (Scharpf, 1994). A way that this can occur through repetition of questions or un-blame worthy questions asked to limit blame generation and prop up government actions. As shown through of Mr William Wragg (Hansard, 2021, vol 686, 6th jan). This demonstrates that blame avoidance doesn't just occur by governments as a whole, but the opposition and individuals use strategies to allow government to avoid blame.

Issues with research and its next steps

What type of issue is covid?

A global pandemic requires fast and extreme action. For example, the use of compensation may not be a strategy used by a right-wing Conservative Governments during stabile times.

Therefore, this could make these results unexplainable outside of a global crisis. This idea is furthered when we look at the nature of the Covid-19 issue.

It can be plain to see that the Covid-19 pandemic wasn't an 'easy issue' due to it being unfamiliar and no single correct response to its management. Indicating that the nature of Covid-19 was both 'new' and 'hard'. Due to its complexity and lack of familiarity makes preference-formation on hard issues not so easily predictable from existing belief systems.

The nature of this issue provides it with the capability to affect multiple policy areas with undefined outcomes. Due to the lack of familiarity of the issue it created a low information environment where citizens cannot identify if the strategies take up by governments are correct (Carmines and Stimson,1980). until after they are in place and the consequences recorded.

The consequences of the nature of Covid-19 on this research is twofold. firstly, it's results, strategies and coding system may be contained within 'hard' and 'new' issues. In order to find corresponding results in further research. Secondly it implies that the accuracy of these results is also limited to the confines of 'hard' issues.

A place of further research could test this by trying to understand the question if another pandemic would occur would this be a 'hard and new' issue, or would it become familiar due to the global response to Covid-19 and what affect would this have on blame avoidance strategies. It can be predicted that if this was to be defined as a 'easy / familiar' issue than the results of the blame avoidance coding scheme would not conquer with the Covid-19 results.

Conclusion

Through the data and analysis shown above Hering's (2008) revised TBA are as relevant as ever in the modern world to ensure transparency and scrutiny over how our nations are governed.

By utilising these typologies (as well as Issue rejection) into a coding scheme has highlighted the BAS used by the British government throughout the Covid-19 pandemic. Which has demonstrated the high proportion of discourse used and reviled the dominant British strategy of electoral mobilisation.

While also reviling the ability for government to shift its values to ensure its prolongation in power. While it's limited use of cooperative strategies discloses the cultural factors of blame avoidance but the electoral factors of blame avoidance. Overall demonstrating the lack of transparency and effective scrutiny of the British government's handling of the Covid-19 pandemic while consequently showing their effective ability at using BAS.

This helps to make sense of the political consequences of the global pandemic and ensure accountability in the policy making process. Contributing to the development of a framework

for analysing government blame avoidance strategies across a variety of policy areas with other potential applications including the analysis of climate change. Addressing these gaps in research are important when there are calls for greater scrutiny of government policy.

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